



PRESS RELEASE

House National Security Committee

Floyd D. Spence, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN FLOYD SPENCE **HNSC MARKUP OF H.R. 2786**

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We are here today to mark-up H.R. 2786, the Theater Missile Defense Improvement Act of 1998. This bill is intended to address the accelerated threat posed by recent theater ballistic missile developments around the world. North Korea has deployed the No Dong-1 missile. Iran's development of the Shahab-3 missile has proceeded rapidly and could be flight tested within the next year. The Shahab-3 will have sufficient range to strike Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Israel.

The speed of these developments was unanticipated by the intelligence community and they warrant a response. Our currently deployed missile defense systems were designed against older and slower threats and have only limited capabilities against this new generation of more capable missiles.

Mr. Weldon, who has spearheaded this effort with both patience and persistence, has been, quite frankly, ahead of both the Intelligence Community and the Department of Defense when it comes to the seriousness of this threat and the need for a rapid response. Likewise, Mr. Pickett and Mr. Spratt's efforts have strengthened this legislation and helped make it a strong bipartisan response to a serious threat. I commend all three of the bill's sponsors for crafting a serious response to a real world problem.

The measures in this bill meet three important criteria. First, all are executable in the current fiscal year. It is therefore important for us to provide the funding and the authority to proceed in a timely manner. Second, all measures in this bill are consistent with planned missile defense systems and architectures. And third, this legislation is entirely consistent with current international agreements.

Once the committee completes consideration of this bill and files it early next week, Mr. Skelton and I will be working with our respective leaderships to move it to the House floor as rapidly as possible. Floor consideration may occur with the bill in its current form — a supplemental authorization. But I also intend to

work with leadership and with the Appropriations Committee to hopefully find a way to attach these provisions — in the form of supplemental appropriations — to the Emergency Supplemental that will be working its way to the House floor in the weeks ahead. Doing so may raise many of the same spending and offset issues that are currently under discussion with regards to the Emergency Supplemental. But for an issue of this importance, we cannot afford not to find a way to get these funds authorized, appropriated and enacted.

I once again commend Mr. Weldon, Mr. Pickett and Mr. Spratt for their efforts, express my strong support for this measure, and urge my colleagues' support as well.